

Food Notes | The Newsletter of Food for People The Food Bank of Humboldt County

SUMMER ISSUE 2020



IN THIS ISSUE | COVID - What's Updates from Se

Responding to Crisis

What's changed:

By Anne Holcomb, Executive Director

We all know that change is inevitable and can often provide the impetus to take a fresh look at things and find new ways forward, but the dramatic changes Food for People has gone through in recent months has brought us into some entirely new territory. The loss of our main facility on 14th St. (more on page 4) followed shortly by shelter in place orders and the need for dramatically different safety protocols due to COVID-19 have been a lot to swallow in one fell swoop, and we've been "dancing as hard as we can" ever since! I'd like to take this opportunity to outline what that looks like for us right now.

Operations: Our 14th St. facility has housed the majority of staff and program operations since 1998, but the extensive damage caused by the sewer inundation and the subsequent mitigation has forced us to limit operations to the rear part of the building, which suffered the least damage. The pantry, offices, and mid-warehouse spaces are nonfunctional, so we had to move staff to three other offsite locations as the pandemic was unfolding. The Eureka Choice Pantry was moved to the former Chamber of Commerce building at 2112 Broadway, along with Pantry, Outreach, and Local Food Resources staff. We were already leasing additional warehouse space on 2nd St. so those operations have continued and several staff moved into the three office spaces available there. We were able to lease additional warehouse space on Cedar St., which has been critical to our ability to purchase food to meet increased demand.

Food Distributions at Pantry and Senior Program sites: We've spent the last 12 years focused on the "choice" model of food distribution, which gave our clients the opportunity to choose the foods that best fit their personal, dietary, and cultural needs. It was structured as a "shopping trip" and had its genesis at the height of the last recession when lots of people who had never had to ask for help before were coming into the food bank seeking food assistance. We could see how impersonal it was to just hand someone a bag of food and assume it would meet their needs, so our staff conducted nationwide research to find models that were more welcoming and dignified, and we adapted what we learned for our own programs. It has worked well, providing opportunities to chat with folks about recipe ideas and personal preferences, and has provided us with new insights into the most needed and desired types of foods, which has helped guide our purchasing. And most importantly, it has provided those coming to the food bank with a new level of dignity.

Unfortunately, that model doesn't work within the new COVID-19 safety protocols, and we've had to shift gears and provide pre-assembled food bags to limit exposure and keep

information about the additional safety protocols in light of the pandemic, and have had to "catch up" with people we've been

Drive-up and drive-through programs have been implemented at sites that have the space for them, and safe distancing requirements, including traffic cones, caution tape, and signage, are in place. Drive-through won't work. All of our employees wear gloves and masks, and food is placed on a table for the individual to pick up. We clean after each transaction. In an effort to reduce contact, we require program participants to wait outside to keep extras on hand for those who need them. It was tough to get an adequate supply of gloves and hand sanitizer initially, and we've had to rely on community members who shared

Backpacks for Kids: We have a team of personnel across the county who manage the program going once the schools closed. We discussed how they wanted to proceed once the program was announced, and every one of the 30 sites made it work. They made the community come together, food, pack the bags, and deliver the bags weekly through the end of the school year.

Summer Lunch: This summer marks our 24th year as a sponsor of the Summer Lunch program, serving children at 30 sites. But uncertainty about the federal funding meant we be served in a congregate environment. The reality of our compromised facilities (lack of refrigerated foods) and overtaxed staff made it extremely difficult for us to consider a site that serves children at sites located in the city. However, our biggest concern was the children who were not fed, especially in light of the financial challenges for families. Thankfully we have some great volunteers who have stepped up to help.

Many of our local school districts are providing meals for the children who are not being fed at home.

Anne Holcomb

will continue for the summer as well. For the first time in many years, the Arcata and McKinleyville school districts decided they would offer a summer lunch program, and Laura Chase at Eureka City Schools was willing to serve the rest of our sites in Eureka and points south. The one remaining gap to consider was Hoopa and Willow Creek. Providing and delivering fresh, daily meals would have been too costly, so we decided to offer the children and families a weekly food box and secured funding from the North Coast Grantmaking Partnership to make it happen. One hundred boxes per week are being distributed by the Hupa Family Resource Center and Dream Quest, and we've contracted with local farmers in their region, who are supplementing the boxes with weekly deliveries of fresh produce, thanks to our Locally Delicious Farmer Fund.

Volunteers: Although we have a very diverse volunteer pool, retirees have always been the largest part of that cohort; and they are also in the high risk category for COVID-19. As a result, we've had to limit their involvement and boy do we miss them! We've also had to cancel the large group volunteer events and work with much smaller groups to ensure social distancing, which means our staff has had to put in extra time to fill in the gaps and prepare the food bags. Fortunately, we temporarily had assistance from CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) volunteers assigned through the Emergency Operations Center (EOC); unfortunately the EOC recently determined they could no longer volunteer for us without obtaining Safe Food Handler certification, so this assistance has come to an end for now. We're also grateful for the assistance provided by our partners from DHHS, who stepped up to help with intake and bag prep at the Eureka Pantry and with deliveries to northeastern Humboldt. In the initial wake of the pandemic, we had hoped to access National Guard help, as other food banks around the state have been able to do, but upon contacting our local EOC we found out it would be unavailable to us so we've forged ahead and pieced together volunteer resources as best we can.

Nonperishable Food donations: Figuring out how to safely accept donations of food amidst concerns about how the virus is transmitted has also been tricky for us. As word of our building disaster and the food we lost spread, we received many calls from community members who wanted to donate food. At that point, we didn't have adequate space to store donations of food, and then came COVID-19 and conflicting information about how long the virus could live on different surfaces. Food donations would typically be placed in a large bin and then sorted and packed into boxes by volunteers during one of our large, volunteer events. Since none of that was safe or feasible, we determined that it made more sense to request cash donations so that we could do bulk purchases and not have to deal with foods that had been handled multiple times; it also made it easier to store the already palletized food and eliminated the need for volunteers to sort and box it. Thanks to community support, we've been purchasing more food than usual to meet surging

our staff and limited volunteer pool. Pantries outside of Eureka have provided donations. To find out if a pantry in your area needs donations, visit our Pantry Network at <https://foodforpeople.org/programs>.

Food Drives: The annual Letterman Food Drive, which is held nationwide on the second Friday of November, was officially cancelled this year. It is the largest food drive of the year and typically brings in 40,000+ pounds of food for pantries countywide. It will be missed. Food for People Union is exploring the idea of making a similar drive to help offset the loss of food donations. The pandemic is likely to persist until a vaccine is available, so we will continue to take whatever actions are necessary to keep everyone safe. We will continue to hold holiday food drives or the other, smaller food drives. A place throughout the year will look for food drives to keep you all updated as plans evolve. Food donations are the easiest way to help, so please make purchases and keep our programs strong.

Gleaning & fresh produce: We have always appreciated our partnerships with local farmers to invite us to come and pick excess produce from their fields, plus leftovers from Farmers' Markets. We've been able to pick up that didn't get picked up. Those relationships will continue as long as they are comfortable. We encourage volunteers to come to their farms; much of the produce will be placed out in the field with folks working. Gleaning from backyard gardens can be a bit trickier. We will do our best to make it as long as it can be done safely, and we encourage gardeners to donate to a local food bank or relief program in your community. You can find contact info on our website www.foodforpeople.org under the pantry-network for a complete list of locations and distribution days/times. Since our locations have limited capacity and staff are spread across many locations, it is not feasible for us to have a new location to accept donations on a regular basis. If you have questions or need more information, contact Kenney, Local Food Resources Coordinator, at 707.438.3112 or via email at akenney@foodforpeople.org.

We know this is a lot to digest and we are working to change and evolve as we all work through this. We express our heartfelt thanks for the support that so many individuals, families, and concerned community members have provided. Inspiring. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. Email is the best way to reach me at aholcomb@foodforpeople.org.

Please stay safe and be well,

Rachel Holcomb



Adjusting After Disaster

Updates from Sewer Inundation at Food for People

By Anne Holcomb, Executive Director

Food for People's wild journey of the last two and a half months started with the city sewer malfunction that occurred on February 28th, sending a gusher of sewer water several inches deep throughout our building. In the days that followed, the extent of the damage quickly became obvious as workers in biohazard suits and respirators worked to mitigate the damage; removing the standing water, disinfecting equipment and building surfaces, tearing out walls, ripping up flooring, and completely dismantling our commercial kitchen. It looked like a war zone and left us wondering how on earth we could resume services in such a seriously compromised facility.

Our first priority was to find a new location for our Choice Pantry, which typically serves 1300 Eureka area households each month. Fortunately, the City of Eureka offered us the use of the old Chamber of Commerce building at 2112 Broadway. Thanks to the herculean efforts of our staff and volunteers, racking, refrigeration equipment, desks, and large quantities of food were moved into the new site and we opened for business on March 11th. It was initially set up in our preferred "choice" style, which ironically was initiated at the height of the 2008-2009 recession to provide our clients the dignity they deserve in choosing the items that fit their personal and dietary needs. But in less than a week's time, as more information about the seriousness of the coronavirus was released, we realized we would have to shift gears once again and switch to pre-bagged food to minimize contact and keep everyone safe. Staff and volunteers rallied and continue to pre-bag both nonperishable and fresh items on a weekly basis.

our team to the Broadway location warehouse space on 2nd Street. A were able to lease additional ware with owner Ken Gregg offering us free. It's been a constant shuffle of multiple sites and an ongoing challenge away from the facility that has been

new

Sewage water being sucked from Food for People's warehouse.





The New Life Services team strategizing clean up at Food for People's 14th St. location.

our 18 programs for the past 20 years. And it has been a particularly stressful and exhausting time for our staff. They've experienced a complete disruption in their daily routines and a shift in job duties, and it has unfolded as they've struggled with the same fears we all have about contracting the coronavirus. But they've proven themselves to be the true heroes we always knew they were, and we're proud of the fact that, thanks to their commitment and the support we've received from our community, we've been able to maintain operations countywide.

Food distributions throughout our countywide network of 17 food pantries, 16 senior program sites, homebound delivery program, Mobile Produce Pantry, Backpacks for Kids, and Children's Summer Lunch program look different than they have in the past, in order to maintain social distancing and ensure the safety of our staff, volunteers, and clients. Drive-up or drive-through models have been implemented at sites that have the space to do so safely, and traffic cones and caution tape are used to mark off six-foot distances where that is not possible. All staff and volunteers are required to wear masks and gloves, and regular use of hand sanitizer and disinfectants is required.

Managing sites that typically serve 50-200 people over the course of a few hours has been the biggest challenge. Officers from the CSET team at Eureka Police Department have been a great resource with drive-up/drive-through operations locally but absent that resource in the more rural communities, we've had to rely on other partners for help. DHHS Outreach staff have been a fantastic resource, and site partners at various locations countywide have stepped up to help us distribute senior bags and the produce typically provided through our Mobile Produce Pantry, to ensure struggling households receive the food they need. School personnel from the 35 sites participating in the Backpacks for Kids program made it clear they wanted the program to continue even if schools were closed. Many have been picking up the food, packing the bags, and delivering them to the homes of the children enrolled in the program. We appreciate the dedication of local school district staff that has done an outstanding job keeping the kids fed despite school closures.

The bottom line is that we are fortunate to be part of a community that pulls together when times get tough. This is new territory for all of us, and it's hard to know how the devastating economic impacts of the coronavirus will unfold in the coming months and perhaps years. But the outpouring of support for first responders, essential services workers, and those of us who provide critical safety net services has been heartwarming and inspiring. We have the deepest gratitude for all the volunteers, community partners, and financial donors who have stepped up to help. Your support makes it possible for us to help when needed most. And that's what community is all about. If you or someone you know is in need of food assistance,

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Jud
Kar
Co
Kay
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Lori
Mat
S



Tribute & Memorial Contributions

You can honor a friend or family member by making a contribution to Food for People. Simply add a notation to your gift. If you do, we'll send a card to let that person know about the donation and the way to celebrate and/or honor the memory of someone.

In Memory Of

Andy Araneo
Arvis Turner
Calvin Calvert
Carolyn
Charles & Graciela
Sears
Cora Lois Plant
Corky Nordstrom
D. Eric Pike
Dennis John Startare
Dick Schirmann
Don Baughman
Don Kohls

Dorothy Hamilton
Elaine Grosso
Elda Billington
Elma Burns
Eula Wilson
Gene E. Whatley &
Robert G Turner
George Floyd
George Wheeler
George, my brother
Gloria Fanuchi
Harold & Jean Fisher
Harry V. Hill
Henry Brazil
HSU Football

Ida Newell
Ivanka Velinova
Jeff Wissman
Jim Ely & Judy Arday
Jim Vaughan
Joan Madej
Joan P. Griffin
Joe D. Hood
Johanna McSmith
John F. Istvanyi
Johnny O.
Joseph Svoboda
Joshua Lockett
June Howells
Kala

Katherine Uemura
Kathryn Knight
Kelly L. Kyle
Kyle
Larry DePeel
Laurey & Jay Sullivan
Leroy Quisby
Linell Karen Walker
Liz Anker
Lou Mihalka
Mary & Foster Keller
Maurice Silva
Micki Aronson
Nona Kraus
Philippe & Denise

In Honor Of

"Alex the Vagabond"
Alex Penn
Anne Holcomb
Anne, Carly, & Paloma!
Anne Harris
Arianna
Arlene Hoopes
Austin Allison
Bella Fratkin
Betsy Watson
Betty Sturdivant
Caleb Tyner
Camille Tyner
Carl Tuck
Carol Vander Meer
Carrie Mae Smith
Carrie Slack
Cate Holm
Colleen Hudson
Daniel
Deb Waxman

Diana Easson
Diane Anderson
Diane & Jerry Bible
Diane Luzzi
Dorothy
Dorothy Rivers
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Ingrid Monaghan
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Micha & Poonam
Carnahan

Michael Dolfini
Michael S. Welch
Michael Tyson
Mike Reinman
Monica Babczak
Munson
Myrna Reid
Nana
Nancy Baar
Nancy Pelosi &
Chuck Schumer
Nell Finger
Nellie Thompson
Nona Kraus
Patt Lari
Patte Rae
Peg Anderson
Peyton Tyner
President Carly
Robbins, Rotary
Club of Eureka
Ray Mechals

*"In honor our local Health Care Providers,
keeping HumCo strong!"*

"In honor of our first responders"

"In honor of Humanity"

"In honor of #BlackLivesMatter"

*"In honor of All Humboldt County
those who are outta w..."*

"the hard work..."

IN HONOR OF FOOD BANK STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS!

*"In honor of all who are keeping us safe and providing ordinary
services in a very NON-ORDINARY time. Thank you ALL for what you
do each and every day: Fight Hunger! You are a true blessing."*

"Bless you for what you are doing."

*"In honor of you hardwork
lines, feeding hungry people
days. Bless you!"*

"In honor of your recovery effort!!! Thanks for..."

"In honor of all of you working so hard to feed my neighbors, thank you for your s..."



The Backpacks for Kids program is able to continue to serve children during the pandemic.

Backpacks for Kids

Continuing Services in a Pandemic

By Carrie Smith, Child & Senior Nutrition Programs Coordinator

The current public health emergency has highlighted the vulnerability of the 22.5% of Humboldt County children who live below the federal poverty threshold. Many of these kids rely on the food that schools provide during the week and our Backpacks for Kids program on the weekends. The school closures have changed this model. The Backpack for Kids program typically supplies a weekend food bag to school-aged children who are dealing with food insecurity. This is an important program, as it keeps kids fed and nourished so they can come to school on Monday morning ready to learn. But what happens if kids don't go to school?

We all found out the hard way this year when all schools throughout Humboldt County abruptly ended mid-year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With so much change and uncertainty, we here at Food for People had to get creative to ensure the Backpacks for Kids program could continue. We knew that the volunteer component of the program needed to be limited. Most of our volunteers are in the at-risk category, and we wanted to reduce the amount of contact the food receives before reaching the homes of children.

In the process of contacting the 35 schools that participate in the Backpacks for Kids program, it was clear that it was a priority for all of us to work together to get the food out. And that's exactly what happened. School and Community/Family Resource Center staff stepped up in order to continue getting the food out to the nearly 600 students we serve each week. Some schools had the Resource Centers pick up the food, pack the bags, and then contact the families for pick-up each Friday. At other schools, staff actually delivered the food bags directly to the homes of each child.

"I had families that were hesitant to ask about the program after shelter-in-place started." Says Christa Jones, the Secretary at Grant Elementary. "But they were relieved when I said they could still receive a weekend food bag. What a blessing for our families."

With parents forced to stay at home to care for and educate their children, sometimes at the expense of their jobs, Food for People was able to continue

I see the success of a true reflective relationships and our community supportive agencies. People. The role of their role as a for our students. Nikki Adams, team including able to reach phone each week able to pick up families receive Overwhelming in the way of personal moment through our food. We know the value in our community sense of action it provided us others. Seeing up when they warmed our hearts for this partnership to our continued

Text



In the weeks following the stay-at-home orders, a drive-thru food distribution that saw nearly 5

Food Bank Advocacy

Food Safety Net Responds to COVID-19 Crisis

By Heidi McHugh, Community Education & Outreach Coordinator

While the world and our country grapple with the tremendous challenge the COVID-19 virus has placed upon our economy and way of life, the food safety net is responding exactly as it was designed to respond to a crisis of this scale. The ways in which safety net programs are responding to increased need for nutritional assistance echo what advocates have been saying for years: Programs like SNAP, WIC, and Free and Reduced Price School Meals should be made more accessible by reducing barriers to enrollment and increasing benefits to truly meet the need and improve health.

Food insecurity — defined as the inability to afford healthy food for all family members — affected 37 million U.S. households even before the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. But the inability to access enough food is on the rise as unemployment has surged into double-digits, and many workers are furloughed without pay. The most recent data from Northwestern University shows that food insecurity in California has risen 2.4 times the pre-pandemic levels. According to data from Feeding America,

California's food banks are experiencing a 73% increase in demand.

California Department of Social Services data shows similarly shocking trends — for five consecutive weeks in March and April, weekly applications for SNAP were twice as high as in February. And according to the California Association of Food Banks, “in particular, COVID-19 has widened the racial disparities of hunger and poverty, as communities of color experience the health and economic impacts of the pandemic on a far deeper scale. Nationally, among those with children, 24% of households with a white respondent were food insecure during April or May, compared to 41% of households with a Black respondent, and 36% of those with a Hispanic respondent.”

The response to this increased need has been robust in California, but there is still opportunity to do more. To meet the increased demand for CalFresh (SNAP) county agencies have

Allotment increased benefits to for the household size. For example, a household that customarily receives \$16/month now receives an allotment of \$194/month for the month of June. Children who were eligible for free meals at school were eligible for free meals at home. P-EBT benefits have helped families purchase food when schools were closed. In an emergency, families have gotten a cash benefit on their P-EBT card to use at the grocery store. Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has received state waivers to remove the need for a visit to the WIC office in order to receive benefits. The program has made purchasing food easier.

These changes are reducing the burden on food banks, increasing access to nutritious food, and supporting the economy. Northwestern University found that 8.6% of Californians — nearly one in ten — use food banks. That's 3.5 million Californians. CalFresh distribution began in mid-May. So far, over \$1.15 billion has been made available through P-EBT. \$1.15 billion has been made available spent directly at local grocery stores. In pre-COVID-19 times the CalFresh program amplified this data:

- 1 in 20 bags of food assistance is from charity; the rest comes from SNAP.
- Every billion in SNAP benefits creates 14,000 jobs in states like California. SNAP supports farming industries, including nut and fruit.
- Annually, SNAP drives \$7.5 billion in sales across California, especially in rural areas. It helps farmers to have markets for their products and retailers to have customers.

Continued from page 8

effective economic stimulus programs across the federal government. In other words, every \$5 in SNAP benefits generates \$9 in economic activity.

While these temporary changes to increase access are in response to the pandemic, these results echo what advocates have been working to implement permanently. Burdensome application and reporting requirements have been identified as key reasons potentially eligible households decline to participate in CalFresh. The state enrolled just 72% of eligible residents in CalFresh in 2016, the fifth lowest rate in the nation, leaving behind about \$1.8 billion in federal funding earmarked for food insecurity. But 72% is a vast improvement from the state's 2012 participation rate of 55%. In that timeframe critical changes were implemented. The removal of the finger-imaging requirement, the move to enable telephone interviews, reduced reporting intervals, removal of the lifetime ban for certain felons to receive CalFresh, and the removal of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Cash-Out policy are changes that ushered in higher participation.

Despite all the data on how SNAP helps to lift families out of poverty and improve health and performance at work and at school, we are still fighting to protect and improve federal nutrition programs. The Great Recession demonstrated SNAP's ability to expand as needed when the program saw a peak of 52 million participants in 2011, and then contracted down to 45 million in 2017, as expected as the economy marginally improved.

The fight to maintain important safety net programs that help eliminate hunger in our country continues amid the COVID pandemic and accompanying economic crisis. The recent threats to the SNAP program highlight just how important it is that we keep fighting and advocating for programs that help relieve hunger. American families are facing unprecedented levels of unemployment and uncertainty of childcare options amid a massive health crisis. We need support for our human right to access food.

Donate online | www.fresh.org

FREE PRODUCE DISTRIBUTIONS Fresh Produce for Low-Income Families



For those in need of extra help, People's Free Produce Distributions expand access to healthy foods, via Produce Distributions in Eureka and Redway every month from November to March.

Backpacks for Kids

You Can Help Children Facing Hunger During the COVID-19 Crisis.

The school year is coming and children in our community need help more than ever. Backpacks for Kids provides a bag full of nutritious food for children in need on the weekends for the school year.

The Backpacks for Kids program will continue for participating school kids during the pandemic, whether their schools are meeting in the classroom or doing distance learning.

Sponsor a Eureka Student today and get recognized in the Times-Standard Campaign

\$600

\$300

\$100

*will sponsor a child for a full year in the program!

— Join these Backpacks for Kids partners and help Eureka school children —



Fermentation Station

Sauerkraut

By Dorina M Espinoza, Master Food Preserver Advisor (UC Cooperative Extension Humboldt/Del Norte) & Food for People Board Member

In early May, Food for People received a large donation of cabbage from Family Agriculture Resource Management Systems (FARMS). I was excited to hear of bins and bins of cabbage heads, because that meant sauerkraut time! Wearing my Master Food Preserver apron, I created 48 sauerkraut kits (jar, salt, lid, recipe) for Food for People program participants who gathered their cabbage and wanted to make sauerkraut.

Homemade sauerkraut is delicious because it has a crunchy texture, and it's tasty. Although we are still learning how eating sauerkraut is good for us, there are health benefits. Sauerkraut has antioxidants that help protect our bodies against some diseases. And, sauerkraut is packed with fiber, vitamins C and K, and iron. Try sauerkraut on top of toasted bread with avocado, atop a baked potato, or alongside your favorite meal.

For food preservation information, visit the Master Food Preserver website (<http://ucanr.edu/mfp>) or call the office at (707) 445-7351.



Sauerkraut
People's Eu
food preser

SAUERKRAUT RECIPE (from So Easy to Preserve) (Makes 1 quart)

Directions:

1. Discard outer cabbage leaves and save one leaf. Rinse cabbage head and loose leaf under cold running water. Drain. Cut head in quarters and remove cores. Shred or slice to a thickness of a 25-cent coin.
2. Measure 1.25 pounds of sliced cabbage (about 12-cups of loose sliced cabbage).
3. Place cabbage in large mixing bowl, add salt. Mix thoroughly using clean hands and firmly grasping cabbage until juice forms.
4. Put small batches of salted cabbage in jar and pack down. Repeat adding and packing. Leave 4-5 inches of space between top of the cabbage and jar rim.
5. Fit loose cabbage leaf on top of shredded cabbage. Push down on cabbage leaf until juice is above the leaf. If juice does not cover cabbage, add enough cooled brine until cabbage is submerged.
6. Weight down cabbage leaf to keep the juice above the shredded cabbage. Place a small plastic zip bag inside the jar and atop the cabbage leaf. Pour brine into the plastic bag. Make sure all creases and air pockets of the plastic bag are removed; make sure all the cabbage is submerged. Zip the bag closed.
7. Cover jar with plastic lid barely on. Place jar in a bowl, to capture liquid that seeps over the top of the jar, and put in a cool, dark place to ferment.
8. Ferment 3 to 4 weeks at temperatures between 70°-75°F. Ferment 5 to 6 weeks at temperatures between 60°-65°F. Temperatures below 60°F, kraut may not ferment and above 75°F, kraut may become soft.
9. Do not disturb the jar until fermentation is complete (when bubbling stops).

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Supporting Local Farmers

Supplying Fresh, Local Produce to Those in Need

By Allison Kenney, Local Food Resources Coordinator

Humboldt County is home to a uniquely dynamic and vibrant organic farming community - a vital resource for our area, especially as food supply chains have been stressed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Food for People, along with fellow advocates, have long been working to increase equitable access to healthy, nutritious foods in our community. A key way we do this is through the Locally Delicious Farmers Fund which allows us to contract with local farmers directly, to support local agriculture, while ensuring low-income individuals in our community can access healthy foods - an effort that has expanded in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even with numerous local farms within Humboldt County, many areas are considered food deserts where residents do not have easy or reliable access to healthy foods. In fact, for many of the areas with the highest concentration of farms, access to healthy foods is hardest, with few nearby stores which often carry little to no local produce. Even for those who have reliable transportation, high food costs can make healthy produce inaccessible for low or fixed-income families. This is one of the key issues the Locally Delicious Farmers Fund strives to address.

The Farmers Fund was established by Locally Delicious, a Humboldt based nonprofit founded by a group of women who are passionate about improving our local food system's strength and sustainability. Thanks to the funds raised by Locally Delicious, Food for People contracts with local farmers each year and provides funding up front, at the beginning of the season, when input costs are high and profits are generally low. During harvest time, Food for People receives the contracted produce and is then able to provide fresh, healthy food for our community.

This year, as a response to COVID-19, local organizations such as Humboldt Area Foundation, St. Joseph Health, McLean Foundation, Redwood Capital Bank, and others have all

creative ways to use the extra funds.

Historically the produce contract with the Farmers Fund has been used in our Senior Center program – which serve one of the largest, most vulnerable populations. With the increase in the Farmers Fund, we are able to expand to reach even more of those in need. We have contracted with an even wider range of local farmers in Humboldt County, linking them to food pantries in our countywide network. This provides a steady flow of fresh produce. In most cases the produce is sourced 15 miles away. In the past, these pantries relied on weekly deliveries of produce from our main source. Typically the produce was sourced from a single source. Because the shipments happen only once a week, they consist of storage crops like potatoes and root vegetables that can hold for a long time.

This new effort to connect producers directly to their very own communities is mutually beneficial for both and farmers. The pantries can now offer a wider variety of all month long. In many cases the vegetables are delivered a day before arriving for the distribution, allowing for eating what's in season, and increasing the importance of eating locally for nutritional and environmental reasons. The farmer's direct connection to the cost of transportation to Eureka and the local pantries. This project also builds a stronger relationship between farms and feeding nearby households. It also reduces fossil fuel consumption and transportation costs. By keeping food sources local, we can maximize the benefits.

Thanks to the Locally Delicious Farmers Fund, residents throughout the county have access to fresh, sustainable, and nutritious produce. This effort is a key component of our mission to support local food systems and ensure that everyone has access to healthy, affordable food.



Volunteers from the McK
produce bags for senior p

Responding to Senior Hunger

The Impacts of COVID Among our Senior Population

By Carrie Smith, Child & Senior Nutrition Programs Coordinator

Food for People makes distributing food to low income seniors one of our top priorities. Now more than ever, with COVID-19 health and safety guidance to consider, it is vital that we work to reach the seniors that are not only dealing with food insecurity, but also chronic health conditions and mobility issues that make it difficult to reach the services that they once did.

In the weeks following the COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders, we fielded an overwhelming number of calls from seniors concerned they would not be able to access food and worried they would go hungry. We quickly adapted our operations to ensure we could continue to serve the most vulnerable in our community during this daunting time. Due to strict COVID-19 safety requirements, we switched over our choice-style senior distributions (where people choose their own foods in-person) to pre-bagged food that is either delivered to folks' doorsteps or picked up via-drive-through, in order to limit contact and keep a high-risk vulnerable population safe.

The fear and anxiety for the seniors in our programs was clear from the start. In the first few weeks we saw seniors arriving to pick up food clutching old socks to their faces because they did not have masks. The number of

We have two programs that a local seniors. The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) provides a 30-40 pound box of food for income-eligible seniors each month. In addition of cheese, bread and up to 10 pounds of meat, some additional protein and dairy items. The Brown Bag Program provides a monthly food bag for low-income seniors at locations throughout the community. We also use this program to reach homebound seniors who need their food delivered. Volunteer drivers deliver food bags who are unable to pick up their own food. Each bag contains a variety of foods, plus cheese, bread, up to 10 pounds of meat, and additional protein and dairy items. In addition to a generous donation of masks, we have a lot of food to seniors in need.

In addition we met regularly with the Area 1 Agency on Aging and Homeless Resource Center (HSRC) – to further help with the creative use of funding provided through the program. Together we were able to add a bag of food to the Delivered Meals program participants from McKinleyville to Fortuna. We also met with HSRC to provide a monthly bag of food to seniors in need.